

**Testimony Submitted to the Michigan Senate  
Commerce Committee  
Economic Development and International Investment Committee  
Transportation Committee**

**Joint Hearing**

**November 2, 2015  
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan**

**By**

**Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians**

My name is Aaron Payment, and I am the Chairperson of the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians. As a member and leader of the tribe, I speak on behalf of my community.

Sault Ste. Marie has been known as Baahweting, meaning place of the rapids, to Anishinaabe people since they first gathered here in this area for over a millennia. It is no secret as to why the Anishinaabek gathered here in what is known as Sault Ste. Marie. The fishing was excellent in the fast turbulent waters and allowed for families to sustain themselves on the abundance whitefish. It has been said that fisherman could fill whole canoes of whitefish.

The Anishinaabek populated the St. Marys River shore where City Hall now stands for thousands of years prior to European colonization. The river was a main gathering place of the Anishinaabek and a stopping point in the Anishinaabe migration story. This site also served as the Wadjiwong (Great Hill) Ancient Burial Grounds, one of the earliest known Anishinaabek burial sites. You can still see some of this today at Brady Park where the Army Corp of Engineers, the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, and The Bay Mills Indian Community have an agreement to protect and preserve what remains of the burial site.

This beautiful area has come to hold great spiritual meaning to the Anishinaabe people. We have cared for this land, our home, for many generations. We hold the waters and the resources to be very sacred to our people. We honor and care for these waters through our ceremonies. We are always thankful for the gifts that this area gave to our Ancestors before us and continues to serve our people today.

Even though the Anishinaabe inhabited this area for thousands of years, it remained very valuable land that would eventually be negotiated upon within various treaties between the federal government and the Anishinaabe. In the 1820 Treaty of Sault Ste. Marie, the

Anishinaabek ceded a substantial portion of Sault Ste. Marie to the United States. In return the perpetual right of fishing at the falls of St. Mary's and also a place of encampment upon the tract were guaranteed to the *Chippeway Tribe of Indians*.

The Anishinaabek signed another important treaty here in 1836, ceding 3.8 million acres most of what is now the Upper Peninsula and Northern Lower Michigan to the United States, making Michigan statehood possible while reserving the right to hunt, fish and gather in the treaty ceded territory.

Today, the descendants of the Anishinaabek people play a significant social and economic role in the city, state, and at the federal level as the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

We strongly support Senator Schmidt's resolution SR 105 to encourage the President, Congress and the Department of Management and Budget to support plans to upgrade the Soo Locks at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan and approve the U.S. Army Corp of Engineer's to fund preparation of an Economic Revitalization Report.

I am available to answer any questions you may have.